

Summary

The transcript is an interview with Tommy Patterson, an 84 year old woman, reflecting on her life experiences and sharing memories, thoughts and feelings on topics spanning her childhood, marriage, raising children, spirituality, career, aging, health issues and personal philosophy on living a fulfilling life. Key themes cover the importance of family, friends and community connections, finding renewal and purpose in nature, persistence in overcoming challenges, aiming to brighten others' lives, and cultivating generosity and positivity.

Chapters

00:00:01 Childhood and Family Influences

Tommy describes her happy childhood growing up on a farm in the Midwest as part of a large extended family. She characterizes her parents and grandparents as hardworking, resilient, community-oriented people who raised her with Midwest values emphasizing not complaining. Her mother and grandmother served as important role models.

00:05:06 Young Adulthood and Marriage

As a young woman, Tommy left her master's program and teaching career in Kansas to marry Dick Patterson, move to the mountains in Colorado and start a family. She reflects on the difficulty of that decision and subsequent transition into marriage and motherhood.

00:06:01 Raising Children and Family Life

Tommy lovingly recalls memories of raising two sons, Mark and Craig, as a music teacher and homemaker. She discusses the joy of seeing them grow into good, talented and persistent men but also the challenges of not knowing if she was doing parenting right.

00:02:45 Spiritual Connections to Nature

Living in the mountains, Tommy finds spiritual renewal in the natural beauty surrounding her home. She describes profound moments gazing at the Earth's creation and skies, evoking ideas on life's origins and destiny.

00:13:16 Working and Community Involvement

For 35 years, Tommy worked assisting author Joanne Greenberg while also volunteering teaching music, visiting isolated seniors and attending community meetings. She values the discussions and connections these activities brought.

1. 00:53:01 Aim to make someone else's life a bit brighter each day through laughter, help or other positivity.
2. 01:07:09 When assessing others, try to be more generous allowing that I likely also rub some people the wrong way.
3. 00:26:06 Cultivate an attitude focused on changing audience thinking rather than just communicating my own ideas.
4. 00:53:22 Make memories with family and friends while still possible.

Craig Patterson 00:01

What was special of why did you come to evergreen instead of going back to his home?

Tommy Patterson 00:05

Oh, well, he was from he, was born in Trinidad and he Didn't think he wanted to go to Trinidad because that was Really off

the beaten track although that that might not be such a bad place now. I'd be more laid -back, but He mostly wanted, to be in the mountains Greeley is where he went to school, but he didn't want to go back to Greeley.

Tommy Patterson 00:37

So he applied to about a dozen different places around Colorado, and he got responses from about eight of them, I guess. One of the from Colorado Springs called him up on the phone and said that they wanted him that he could have a job there if he wanted to come, and they knew that he really wanted come to Evergreen.

Tommy Patterson 01:06

Because he had come out here and looked at all these places, Crested Butte and Ever Green and Colorado Springs and I don't even know where else, everywhere. And he had decided that Ever green was a small town and that was where he wanted be.

Tommy Patterson 01:22

So the guy in Colorado Spring said, I know you really want to be in Evergreens so if I if you say you'll take this job I kind of hope that you won't come up later on and say, oh, no, you really want to go to Evergreen.

Tommy Patterson 01:34

He said, No, he would go to Colorado Springs. So he hung up the phone and Ever Green called. Jefferson County called, and so he called Colorado Springs right back and said hey, guess what? They just called and he said the guy was in Colorado Springs was very nice and says, well, no you didn't wait six months to do that.

Tommy Patterson 01:53

You did it right away. And so then he signed on for here. But Jefferson County is a huge district. And he said he would come here if he could go to Evergreen. He did not want to go into Denver or Jefferson County, the big city schools in Jefferson county.

Tommy Patterson 02:11

He wanted to be in the mountain schools. And so they promised him a place in Evergreens. And back then, it was so remote that we used to laugh and say, we got hazard pay. We got an extra hundred dollars a month because our power bills were more expensive than the ones in town.

Tommy Patterson 02:31

After a couple years, they quit that.

Craig Patterson 02:34

A little bit ago, you were talking about the house and how it was your spiritual center. How has Evergreen in the House played into that, into your spirituality and your current life?

Tommy Patterson 02:45

I get to look out the window of our house and see the mountains, and I get to reflect on the whole business of the creation of the Earth. That is one part of it. And then I get look at the sky and think about the things that have been before and that may come after and i get a look that and sometimes I see contrails which give me the feeling that I'm part of the whole thing and it's something I don't happen to have ever gotten anywhere else but I get it here.

Craig Patterson 03:38

Why did dad decide to build to design his own house?

Tommy Patterson 03:43

Well partly because we knew how expensive having somebody else design and build it would be that that was one thing. But then another thing was that I think that he wanted to have it a certain way and the only way he'd get it the way that it was to do it himself.

Craig Patterson 04:02

How long did it take to build and where did we live while it's being built?

Tommy Patterson 04:08

It took from January to October to built because that includes digging the well and doing the road and all of that and we

finally decided that we had to move to get in here and so we moved before it was completely done and while it was being built when we first got here we lived in what we call the ice cream shop.

Tommy Patterson 04:36

When we move there it wasn't an ice -cream shop but it had been an ice cream shop on the highway down the road from where our current house is. And the reason we moved there is that the guy from whom we bought the land where we built the house owned four little cottages down road and would rent us one of them because we had bought land from him.

Craig Patterson 05:06

Is there something that people don't know about how you might have helped with the EHS students?

Tommy Patterson 05:15

I helped grading papers with the EHS students because dad was playing and he really was not terribly in love with grading paper. Talking to the kids and talking about the subject engaged him. But the grading of the papers so between those two things, I don't think he's particularly liked it But also it was a time thing because he was working playing in Denver Frequently for or five nights a week.

Tommy Patterson 05:55

It was hard for him to get his papers graded So I helped with that

Craig Patterson 06:01

And no one ever found out

Tommy Patterson 06:04

Not early on, no, a lot of people know now because it's been so long, I figure it doesn't hurt now. I don't think anybody's going to get after us now."

Craig Patterson 06:14

Certainly all the memories of when your kids were growing up must be fantastic, but do you have a favorite memory of where they were going up?

Tommy Patterson 06:25

I don't know if I have a favorite one. I do remember one when Craig was probably about three or four years old. I took him to a Halloween party where everybody was in costume and it was time to go home him, and so I went over and picked him up and said, It's time to go.

Tommy Patterson 06:56

And he started beating on me, on my shoulder. He didn't hurt me. But he kept like this, you know, and kind of wailing. And I looked at him and he said—and I said I have the wrong tiger. I had another person in a tiger suit, which was just like a Tiger suit I made him.

Tommy Patterson 07:15

So I look for his mother. We exchanged tigers and I got him home. And I guess I was kind of touched. I'm glad that he was that smart that I knew I wasn't his mother, this other kid, but I kind was touched then that Craig wanted to come home with me instead of going with this person.

Tommy Patterson 07:37

person. And with Mark, when he was, I kept a baby book with Mark with all the first this and first that and I probably didn't do as good a job with Craig. But Craig taught, well, I'll get to that in a minute.

Tommy Patterson 07:56

So the, first, one of the things in the babybook is first is, for that first word, and then the first sentence of more than five words, and so Mark's first sentence, of the more five years words was, after we had bought the white Corvette, Mark said, I want to go for a ride in the White Car.

Tommy Patterson 08:18

And I thought, that's more in seven words. So I wrote that down in a book. I though that was kind of cool. But Craig, you were so busy performing, not performing, accomplishing these things that I didn't write it all down.

Tommy Patterson 08:37

But one time you said you wanted me to read you a story, so I said okay. And he said, I'll read it to you. So I gave you the book. And you read the, was it the Mole Family's Christmas? Do you remember what book I'm talking about?

Craig Patterson 08:57

No.

Tommy Patterson 08:58

You sat down, you were four years old. You read this book to me. And I kept looking at it, and I said, did you memorize that? No. I'm reading it to you. And you read me the whole book, I think maybe Dad was there, too.

Tommy Patterson 09:16

And we never figured out how you learned to read that, because we did not teach you to read. I didn't teach Mark to reading either, but he says he read before he went to school. I don't know whether he did or not.

Tommy Patterson 09:30

he says he did, but you definitely did. We did not teach you, and that is why when you were in first grade, no, when were you in kindergarten, yeah, you were fine. In first grade your teacher lets you do all kinds of things because you are smarter than the average bear.

Tommy Patterson 09:57

And then in the second grade, the teacher recognized right away that second grade was definitely under your head and she is the one who endorsed that we send you for one day a week at home to do things at home.

Tommy Patterson 10:28

Well, so I was, in theory, I was homeschooling you one day week. I don't know what I taught you. The part that I remember is that we took field trips occasionally. I let you build models like a maniac, both dinosaur models and car models.

Tommy Patterson 10:46

And I think I'll let you draw some, but I loved giving you spelling tests and I'd give you the spelling test of words like prestidigitator and then turn that paper into the second grade teacher and she would be duly impressed because you spelled all these words that were probably not part of the regular second -grade vocabulary.

Tommy Patterson 11:09

And I finally, I asked you once, how did you learn how to read and you said you didn't know.

Craig Patterson 11:18

Well, when we were growing up, you went to a lot of community meetings, county meetings city planning meetings because I went to a number of them with you what made you decide to become so involved with those?

Tommy Patterson 11:29

Well that's for one thing that a good way to meet other people who live here and I wanted to do that I want to be part of the community and i want know some the other people were also part the committee and then the women rarely worked outside the So they had time because they were taking care of their kids.

Tommy Patterson 11:54

They had days that they could either get a sitter or trade sitting with somebody and go to some of these meetings. And you were so, everybody just marveled at you because I would let you down there. Do you remember going to those meetings?

Tommy Patterson 12:16

We'd take you down there, give you a book, stick you under a table, and you would sit there and read the whole time all these commissioners and everybody were talking about stuff. You never made a scene, you were always just so nifty about the thing that it got to be as much fun as anything else to take your along and watch you amuse yourself with a book or something.

Craig Patterson 12:43

didn't dad once ask you why you went to all the planning meetings I don't did he I remember he said why do you go to

Tommy Patterson 12:54

all these meetings when nothing happens oh and I said but because nothing may happen but something may happen if we don't go did I say that no oh you said

Craig Patterson 13:07

That's why I go because nothing ever make sure nothing happened.

Tommy Patterson 13:10

Oh, okay That's a good reason.

Craig Patterson 13:13

How did you meet Joanne Greenberg?

Tommy Patterson 13:16

Dad had a student right about the time that I was starting to work outside and This student had another who worked for Joann and She needed to quit working for joanne and get a full -time job so she could make some money So, the girl knew that I was starting to freelance, seperating, and wondered if I'd be interested.

Tommy Patterson 13:47

So I, was. And I went over to talk to Joanne and she didn't interview me or anything. She just said, well, come next Monday at two or something. So we just started that way. But I didn't—I started doing that—working out when I was—when Mark graduated from high school, I signed up for a temporary agency.

Tommy Patterson 14:14

And I got on to some places there, and I also signed on be temporary at the school and so I got some work that way, being a substitute secretary at the school. Of course, with doing that I get fired every year and rehired every fall.

Tommy Patterson 14:35

That was kind of tedious. But then eventually the School was trying to save money, so they quit having substitute secretaries. So that kind of fizzled out and then I had a job working for two real estate agents, but no, not agents appraisers, and they got a divorce and so I went with one of them and she died and whatnot and I just stayed with Joanne so that I got it really from one of dad's students.

Craig Patterson 15:11

Were you working with her when she wrote I Never Promised You a Rose Garden?

Tommy Patterson 15:14

No, that was her second book, and I probably didn't start working until about her fourth or fifth book. I don't remember which I'd have to look.

Craig Patterson 15:25

But you've been working with her for quite some time.

Tommy Patterson 15:26

Thirty -five years.

Craig Patterson 15:28

So you must like it.

Tommy Patterson 15:31

Well, it's very challenging. It's also quite a bit of fun because she is approximately my age, she's a little younger, never lets me forget it, but we have the same kind of general background as far as the timing and the country.

Tommy Patterson 15:52

She was born in Brooklyn, New York and she definitely is from an Eastern thing. So being here is totally foreign, was totally foreign but she she trained herself out of having a Brooklyn accent so she doesn't sound Brooklyn now but she wanted to be independent and away from her parents.

Craig Patterson 16:21

Do you have a favorite story about Mark growing up?

Tommy Patterson 16:29

I don't know. I'm not sure whether I do or not.

Craig Patterson 16:33

Are they all your favorites?

Tommy Patterson 16:36

What a diplomatic comment. And I have to think about that a little bit.

Craig Patterson 16:46

We'll come back to that because this is one of the questions that you were not able to prepare for. So that's fine. How did you decide to name your kids? Is there an interesting story there?

Tommy Patterson 16:59

No. I know my mother wondered why we picked the names that we did because they're not family names. And so that is unusual in this relationship to which we belong. This Beckman thing is a huge thing.

Tommy Patterson 17:17

But we pick names that we liked, just we like the sound of them. I later learned that 1960 was a big year for Mark. And he has a cousin named Mark Allen. I think I spelled Allen funny because I wanted it to be different for everybody else, but lots of other people have it spelled whatever, however we spelled it.

Tommy Patterson 17:48

and so when we named you I picked more names just because I liked them but I don't think that 1963 was a big year for Craig. I've only met Vanessa's husband is named Craig is he your age?

Craig Patterson 18:11

No he's younger.

Tommy Patterson 18:12

Is he really? Oh okay.

Craig Patterson 18:18

So working for Joanne has happened, has occurred longer than any other job, what do you like most about working for her?

Tommy Patterson 18:33

Probably. The discussions that we have and and the things that she asks me about either that I have to look up, she does a great deal of her own research. I don't do all of that. Sometimes I find things for, her sometimes I found out things, for but I don't do actual research for her books.

Tommy Patterson 18:57

But talking to her is having a very positive conversation with somebody about the way the world has changed, how we view it, all of both have the same general occupation, which is going to the doctor.

Tommy Patterson 19:27

That's what we both do all the time.

Craig Patterson 19:32

Well, getting back to family, what's the most memorable family vacation? Is there one specific one?

Tommy Patterson 19:43

I remember—you mean you're talking about our family. Yes. Yeah, I do remember the two family reunions we had been to, those were lovely vacations. But I also remember, when we have the whole schmear, one in Colorado and one Oregon, is that where it was?

Tommy Patterson 20:10

But also I remember vacations that we've had with the four of us. And one of them was to—I think we were actually going to Las Vegas, but the thing that I remember about that trip in particular is going into Death Valley.

Tommy Patterson 20:29

I don't know why. It was interesting. We liked it, and we had a good time doing it and made a few funny jokes and stuff. So I remembered that. And I do remember the ones in New Mexico. those those were mostly fun even though we were camping yeah is there one

Craig Patterson 20:55

holiday memory that stands out or one way that we celebrated the holidays the

Tommy Patterson 21:02

only holiday memories that stand out is the one when Colorado was a hundred years old because other people came to celebrate at the same time so we got to to see some other people from the family, and I don't know what you were doing.

Tommy Patterson 21:20

Mark was playing at some kind of celebration in town and wherever they were having it, where they had some people playing. And do you remember what were you doing? In 1976, that was centennial.

Craig Patterson 21:38

No, I remember.

Tommy Patterson 21:42

And that, was pretty fun. I mean, the whole other family was here because they weren't all here but some of them were and so that was kind of fun and it was fun to have Mark be playing there.

Craig Patterson 21:55

What was the hardest part about raising your kids?

Tommy Patterson 22:05

Never knowing whether I was doing it right or not. Always wondering, oh, should I have done it some other way? Although to tell you the truth, I didn't wonder that all the time.

Craig Patterson 22:18

No, I assure you, you did it, right. What do you find to be the best thing about being a parent or a grandparent?

Tommy Patterson 22:33

The best things about a being parent is to see the truly fine young people that I could say, oh, Dick, you and I did that. That is amazing to me that we managed that and And I am sad that he can't see that, but I know it.

Tommy Patterson 23:05

And the grandparent part, I haven't done anything as being a grand parent. She's a good kid. A couple times when she was here she planted flowers in my pots. I loved her for doing that. She was so sweet doing it, and she's very sweet to me, but I don't see her often enough to really know her and I certainly wish her

Craig Patterson 23:30

well. Do you see any of yourself in her? Do you any traits in here that seem like you or specifically unlike you?

Tommy Patterson 23:38

Neither one although somebody in the family has said that she takes after Mark and Mark takes it after me and he is stubborn as a mule. I and she certainly is.

Craig Patterson 23:56

Do you think that they would think that you're stubborn?

Tommy Patterson 23:58

Oh yeah, they think they got it from me.

Craig Patterson 24:02

Do think either of your parents were like that? Do ya think you get that from them?

Tommy Patterson 24:14

No, and I don't know how my mother avoided that because she did frequently get her either her way or get us to do the things that she thought were the right way to them. And I dunno how she got us to do that because she did not get not argumentative but just determined and firm and refused to give in she didn't get like that but there were some things that we knew we were supposed to do.

Craig Patterson 24:51

Well do you think that you have the most which of these do you thing you the have most of talent, intelligence, education, or persistence? Persistence. How do you think that's helped you in your life?

Craig Patterson 25:03

And do you thing that you are at a disadvantage compared to possibly having more of one of the other traits?

Tommy Patterson 25:17

I think it has helped me get some things done that took a while to do, so I kept at it. And I thing that even now, that's in my life in general, but even now I tell somebody, if somebody says to me why don't they do thus and such, and I said who are they and the people who were talking don t know who they are, so I said well what you have to do is find out who they, are and then pursue that and get them to suggest to them that they do such and such.

Tommy Patterson 26:06

And that's what I do, and I consider that something that not very many people do is to make, I make a lot of phone calls to find out who they are. That can be very hard. I have tried to find who now owns the mineral rights to this property.

Tommy Patterson 26:29

I've persisted and have not found that out yet. But I got through the first four owners after they sold it off, and I still don't know who actually owns the mineral rights, I'd like to get them back.

Tommy Patterson 26:45

But it may be impossible, if they want a lot of money, but I haven't found out who owns them. So it's definitely not possible now if I don't know who own them for me to buy them, And why do I want them?

Tommy Patterson 27:02

I don't know. I just think it would be nice to have them.

Craig Patterson 27:07

Sure. When we were growing up I know we listened a lot to Stan Freeberg. Did sayings from the Stan freeberg report recordings filter into our daily life? Do we have family say things that we use from that?

Craig Patterson 27:20

Do you remember what any of those might be?

Tommy Patterson 27:22

Oh yeah from United States of America. Sorry it doesn't do any good Charlie. If you make any kind of mistake and say you're sorry. Sorry doesn't do any good, Charlie. It's too late. You've already poured the tea in the water.

Tommy Patterson 27:36

That's one. And take an Indian to lunch is another one, and the whole thing about playing the music at the time of the Revolutionary War and having them every, the people rolled up in the parchment that there is the Declaration of Independence.

Tommy Patterson 28:05

Part of those, I don't remember them right this minute, but I would know them if you said them. So yes, they've filled, and they have not only filtered to you and to me, they had filtered Margaret. And I said, why did she get it?

Tommy Patterson 28:18

And Mark said because we listened to that all the time. Pat doesn't like it very much. She doesn't think it's as funny. Margaret thinks it's hysterical and she gets a lot of the references that we

Craig Patterson 28:31

use. Do you have a favorite movie and why is it your favorite

Tommy Patterson 28:37

movie? Wait a minute yes I did have I have a couple favorites. I think that probably Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid is one of my I don't know if there's a single one but it is one of my favorite ones and that's because the four of us saw that together a bunch of times or at least twice and it had a few of those sayings filter into our language.

Craig Patterson 29:13

Like think you used enough dynamite there butch?

Tommy Patterson 29:15

That's one never mind that you can't swim you'll probably drone yeah but think and I don't think that's, that we're alone in it. I think there are an awful lot of people who know what that is from. So that, that was definitely one of my favorite ones.

Craig Patterson 29:34

Do you have a favorite book? Oh, I didn't want to interrupt you. Were you gonna say something else?

Tommy Patterson 29:38

No, there, there's some other movies that I do like very much, but I thing that at the moment, that going to take the top of the list. And a Favorite book. No, it has to go by authors.

Craig Patterson 29:55

Alright, who's your favorite author?

Tommy Patterson 30:01

Probably Antoine de Saint -Exupéry because of The Little Prince, which is a book that I find so touching and moving that I can't even read it anymore because the last time I read it I dissolved in tears.

Tommy Patterson 30:18

I am presently reading another Descent Exupéry book, it is not as moving as The Little Prince is, but The little Prince takes the cake for the top book that I also like everything by Wallace Stegner, and I especially like things by, see I can't even remember their names, the immense journey, Lauren Eiseley.

Tommy Patterson 30:47

Lauren Iseley also writes poetically and in ways that address me spiritually.

Craig Patterson 30:58

I have a question here that I think maybe, it's kind of strange, but the question is, what's the most memorable phone call you've ever received? And after you answer, I may have one for you. So, do you have a memorable phone call that you can think of?

Tommy Patterson 31:19

I think that when they called and said my grandfather had died, that's kind of memorable.

Craig Patterson 31:30

I'm thinking of one that happened shortly after dad died. I don't remember exactly how shortly. I guess it would have been about a year.

Tommy Patterson 31:40

Was it a friend of his?

Craig Patterson 31:42

No. I was sitting in the dining room. Phone rang. you answered it and I heard you say I knew it I know it do you remember that call somebody else died no no that was mark calling saying that pat was

Tommy Patterson 32:03

pregnant oh I've teased him about that because mark frequently has said to me Guess what? And I said the first time he Wanted to marry Pat and I I didn't guess that That they were gonna get married and so then they got married That's that's the one where he said they we're gonna getting married on whatever the day was June 20th, I think and Mark said, so I want you to come, and Dad said do we have to?

Tommy Patterson 32:54

And Mark was very insulted. I thought it was funny, but anyway. And then they got married, oh no, they were going to buy a house. Guess what? we're going to buy a house." I didn't guess that. Then guess what?

Tommy Patterson 33:22

Past pregnant. And so I said—then he told me something, guess a while ago, and I don't remember what it was for, but I think I say, oh, past pregnant? No. I says, well, quit telling me guess what? I had used up all my guesses.

Tommy Patterson 33:41

So I said, oh, yes, I can see that because dad had died, they bought a house, and that's how it goes. The dying doesn't necessarily factory in but you get married and then you buy a house and you have a kid.

Tommy Patterson 34:05

Lots of people do that. Sure. So I should have been able to guess that What's the one thing you've always wanted

Craig Patterson 34:12

but still don't have?

Tommy Patterson 34:14

Oh boy, I'm not sure that I can think of anything I've

Craig Patterson 34:21

always wondered and don't have Do you feel differently about yourself now from how you felt when you were younger? Do think you're a different person now, better or worse?

Tommy Patterson 34:34

I would like to pretend I'm better, but I don't know that I am. I have no way of knowing. But I do think I'm terribly different. I think that, I hope that have matured some, but don't know exactly what that means.

Tommy Patterson 34:57

And I don't think I'm a terribly difference person now, Except that maybe I am a little more prone now to doing things the way I feel. I don't mean I take anybody else's ideas into account, but the way that I think it should be done, as opposed to doing it the ways somebody else tells me it ought to be done.

Tommy Patterson 35:26

I do that as much as I did a long time ago. I was very much, because of this family business, family obligations, Grandma Anne, yeah, I tried to do things the way, to cooperate with the ways she wanted things done.

Tommy Patterson 35:49

However, Anne never nagged us about moving out here, which I know made her unhappy. She didn't really want us to move. She wanted us stay closer to her. She never nagged us about that. She also, when we got married, she never nabbed us about having children, which we have some relatives who have said to their children when they get married when are you going to give me a grandchild?

Tommy Patterson 36:18

I think that stinks. That's a terrible thing to say to people. My mother never did that to us. us. Grandma Roy didn't do that to us and so we pretty much managed it on our own terms but I know the thing that she didn't say, I want you to come back and live here. She never laid that on me and it turned out everything kind of worked out okay but her Our life might have been a little more pleasant if we had, not just us, but our whole family.

Tommy Patterson 37:04

And one time she said what she would really like is if Puz and Coke and all of their progeny, you know, that's a lot of people and us all lived in that house in Crete. And I said, we wouldn't all fit.

Tommy Patterson 37:21

And she said no, I guess not. But I don't know what it, I think maybe it was wishful thinking. I didn't think she ever would have really thought that was wonderful to have all 79 of us living there. But she missed having her family around her.

Tommy Patterson 37:40

And after we moved out here, I missed that whole extended family for, for, I don't know, 10 or 20 years, a long time I missed that. I didn't so much anymore. And of course now I've got some, I got Stephanie and Vanessa and their guys and Margaret and George.

Tommy Patterson 38:03

So our extended family is here now.

Craig Patterson 38:10

Is there someone in history that you really admire and why?

Tommy Patterson 38:14

Well, for years I have admired Thomas Jefferson because of something that it says on Jefferson Memorial, or the building. It says, I pledge eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man, or something like that, and I've always admired that.

Tommy Patterson 38:40

But the more I read about Jefferson, the more, I think, he was a flawed person also. And so now I, if anybody says, oh no, Jefferson was terrible, no he wasn't terrible. He was just amazing. He did all kinds of good things.

Tommy Patterson 39:03

He some not very good things. Part of what—he was part of the slave enterprise. And part of it is that he absolutely could not manage money. I mean, he was dead broke when he died. And that's one of the reasons he—I think that is why he gave his library to Congress, because he so broke, he owed them money.

Tommy Patterson 39:32

He probably didn't ever pay his taxes. So he had good and bad, but we all do, I think. I'm sure that there are some people who die in Evergreen who are eulogized as if they never did anything bad. And that's all right.

Tommy Patterson 39:52

In a eulogy, you don't have to say all the bad things people did. But they probably did a few not quite so nice things, and if they were mostly nice, that's good.

Craig Patterson 40:05

Do you have a favorite story or something that you'd like to say about Mark?

Tommy Patterson 40:13

It seems to me that Mark did spend a lot of time trying to please Dick and me. And one time when he, he was valedictorian of his high school class, I think I had the feeling, I don't know whether he ever verbalized this or not, but I had the feeling that he felt he had to do that for Dick and me, which is kind of too bad.

Tommy Patterson 40:42

It would have been nice if he felt like doing it. But maybe it was okay with him, except it turned out to be a moderately humorous, late -told story because there was a thunderstorm when he graduated from high school, and he had to go, they had to move the whole thing inside so that everybody didn't get electrocuted.

Tommy Patterson 41:08

And so I never heard a speech. I don't know what it was about. And I asked him once to give me a copy of it if he'd had it. And he said, well, it got all wet during the storm. So I didn' have any idea what he's said.

Tommy Patterson 41:20

but he went on to do things with his trombone that were very positive. But when he graduated from DU, he did something very interesting. He had said he thought he wanted to go on in music, but then he went to Kansas State, not Kansas, Colorado State College in, is it Fort Collins or?

Tommy Patterson 41:57

Colorado state university, he studied, I think not biology, botany, and now of course we have a trunk full of plants that I'm not supposed to throw away which is very humorous, I don't know whether they're ever going to grow in that trunk or not.

Tommy Patterson 42:17

But after that, he came back to the house and said he had decided that he missed the playing so much that wanted to go on, and then he went to a couple different places to see where he wanted him to move in order to pursue his music.

Tommy Patterson 42:40

and he decided and I I think that took more really took more courage than than that I would have had it at his age to decide to move so he moved he move to New York and and the day that he packed up the car and left all I could say to Dick was well at least we're both crying about the same me already, but he did the things that needed to be done in order to pursue his career, which I admire a great deal.

Tommy Patterson 43:28

I skipped the part about his being—he did a project when he was at DU, so that he graduated He did some from law, which I think that's pretty special. And I don't know whether he did that because he really wanted to or because thought he was supposed to.

Tommy Patterson 43:49

I'm not sure. But anyway, I was very proud of him. I didn't whether that was right. Should I be proud to be his mother? I guess that is what it is. I am proud be to his Mother. And so he has, he's managed in New York since, let's see, 1982, 1983, about 1984 till now.

Tommy Patterson 44:26

Is that 30 years?

Craig Patterson 44:28

Yes.

Tommy Patterson 44:29

He's been there 30 years and I think that everybody I know feels that he's made it. Because he is working, sometimes he doesn't work, but he always gets another job when something closes, when a show closes or when the job folds, somebody calls him and he gets another one.

Tommy Patterson 44:57

and I guess something that struck us was at the Colorado Symphony Guild we had one of the trombone players from the colorado symphony came and did our program one day and so I walked up to him and i was going to ask him something about I said I just I'm sorry to bother you but I just wondered he said oh you wonder it because I was wearing my name tag that said Tommy Patterson and so he said you wonder if I know Mark Patterson.

Tommy Patterson 45:30

He said I've never met him but I knew of him and everybody around me said well I guess that kind of is the frosting on the cake and so it's it it great to think that he's doing something that he really did want to do and he stayed with it and in an awful lot of ways it's amazing to me that it worked out as well as it did.

Tommy Patterson 46:06

I hope it could stay that way for a while.

Craig Patterson 46:11

Before we move on to the present, do you have any closing thoughts about your kids?

Tommy Patterson 46:18

They are both astounding in ways that startle me. I can't figure out how we manage to get such kind and generous and talented children. Well, they're just, they are both something else, and they definitely are our best projects.

Craig Patterson 46:54

So moving on to the present, how is your day different now from your daily routines in the

Tommy Patterson 47:06

My daily routine now is going to the doctor, and that started happening when I was about 75. Oh no, no no. Not that long ago. Let's say after 75, that's when the Dr. thing started, after I was 80 now, it's just one doctor visit after another.

Tommy Patterson 47:35

So, that's how my daily stuff is different from the way it used to be. I still go to exercise class, except now I haven't been for a while because I've had a bunch of problems that have kept me from going, and I don't go community meetings because I don't drive at night at all, or as much as I used to, I certainly don't drive it far I don't drive anywhere except in Evergreen and I used to be a friendly visitor I'm not a friendly visitor anymore because I have an arrangement with the nursing home that I can call my person on the telephone which I do occasionally except probably not terribly often.

Craig Patterson 48:21

Friendly visitor meaning visiting people who can't get out and have any friends.

Tommy Patterson 48:26

Right. And I like doing that because I know that I did something for them, but that did something to me too. It was a very positive experience for me. Now, it just seems to me I'm ridiculously preoccupied with my physical being because I have so many things that are problems.

Tommy Patterson 48:53

Now, I know I'm better off than a lot of people my age, but I am having trouble adjusting to being so infirm and having so many problems trying to adjust. She said quietly.

Craig Patterson 49:17

Well, what do you think the hardest thing is about growing older? And what you do think is the best thing

Tommy Patterson 49:30

I think the best thing is that there is a margin given. I don't like to say I can do whatever I want to do, because that's not entirely true, but I certainly have more leeway to, to see no to things that I cannot do or that I feel I don't want to do.

Tommy Patterson 49:56

I can say, no, I can't manage that. So I have more leeway in my decisions. That's maybe that might be the best thing. And then you want to know the unbest thing?

Craig Patterson 50:08

Yes.

Tommy Patterson 50:17

The limitations that I have on my physical self that keep me from doing things that I really want to, but know that physically I cannot manage them anymore.

Craig Patterson 50:30

If you could be any age right now, what age would it be?

Tommy Patterson 50:36

Assuming one would be that healthiness of that age, if one were that aged.

Craig Patterson 50:40

Not having anything to do with health, just having to deal with which age you felt the most comfortable at or were healthiest, if that's a good solution.

Tommy Patterson 50:50

Well, I remember being 43 and telling Dick that being a 43 was the best year of my life. I'm not sure why. Maybe it's because we were getting along well, doing what we wanted to do together I don't remember for sure but I think of 43 as being a pretty good year but and 40 to 60 was probably pretty good it's been downhill since 60.

Craig Patterson 51:30

Do you feel like you can tell a person how to prepare for old age, is there anything you wish you'd done differently?

Tommy Patterson 51:39

Right, at this moment, I cannot think of something that I wish I had done differently. And the only thing I tell people to prepare for older age is don't get older. That's not a whole lot of help.

Craig Patterson 51:54

Is there something you look forward to now? It's kind of an open ended question, it's hard to answer.

Tommy Patterson 52:02

Well, no, there really isn't, and that's another bothersome thing. There isn't anything I look forward to. I know some people who are in my age group in general who have all kinds of trips planned. I admire that they are, one of them is legally blind and just had her knee replaced, she's my aged.

Tommy Patterson 52:24

No, four years younger than I am. But, I admire that she has the interest to do that, she's planning a trip, and I admire there's no place I want to go, there are some places that would have been nice to but I don't want to go there badly enough to put up with the difficulty of getting there now.

Tommy Patterson 52:48

But there is nothing I especially want to do, so there's nothing that I really look forward to.

Craig Patterson 52:57

What things are most important to you now?

Tommy Patterson 53:01

Well, keeping in touch with my kids and with the people I have known, not so much in previous lives, but just the the I've known around Evergreen, I wanna keep up with them while they're still alive and here.

Tommy Patterson 53:22

A lot of them are moving away and it's harder to keep with. For one thing, if they move to an assisted living place, a lot of them do move into Denver and nobody ever drives down there to see their friends in Denver, so that's, you cut yourself off from a lot of things, but I've forgotten the question.

Tommy Patterson 53:46

Was I looking forward to something? Yes. No, I don't think so.

Craig Patterson 53:54

What do you do for fun now, aside from going to the doctor?

Tommy Patterson 53:59

And you say that tongue-in-cheek, except I have fun going to the doctor because I joke with all of them, and if they think I'm fun to have come in and some of them do seem to enjoy me, then I like that.

Tommy Patterson 54:18

I certainly try to make it a positive, bubbly experience, rather than, oh, good Lord, here I am again. But what do I enjoy doing? Well, actually, when I'm feeling really wonderful, I kind of like my exercise class.

Tommy Patterson 54:38

I'm not liking it since I had my leg operated on that. I've been worse off since had that all done. And I do enjoy seeing Joanne and talking with Joann and talking with the people I know I like doing that.

Craig Patterson 54:59

Do you find present-day the present day world either America or the entire world? Do you find it to be better now or better when you were younger?

Tommy Patterson 55:09

When I was younger it was more manageable for me. I was not having more of an influence on it. But the part that I had to deal with, I think I understood better that part back then. I have no idea how to fix any of the stuff that's going on now.

Tommy Patterson 55:30

There's an awful lot that is not positive about the world. I do not dislike this country. I'm not one of people who hates the government and thinks the governments are doing everything wrong and all of that.

Tommy Patterson 55:47

No, the government, the federal government does a lot of stuff that I appreciate and I want them to keep on doing it. And so for that reason, I'm willing to pay my taxes because see, I feel positive, but yes, yes.

Tommy Patterson 56:01

There's a lotta waste. There may even be some fraud. Well, there is a Lotta fraud, but there's everywhere. Now, if we could get everybody to stop doing naughty things like that, we wouldn't have these problems, either in the private sector or the public sector but I don't think we're gonna fix that and I certainly have no idea how to fix all the stuff that's going on in The Middle East I can't go over there and talk to all the young men who are joining ISIS and saying what is it that you want I can say that to them.

Craig Patterson 56:38

There is a saying that goes they've been fighting for two thousand years.

Tommy Patterson 56:42

Yeah.

Craig Patterson 56:43

It's got to be over soon.

Tommy Patterson 56:46

That's funny.

Craig Patterson 56:52

What have you liked best about your life so far? What's your happiest or proudest moment or

Tommy Patterson 57:02

thought? It is two different things. My happiest personal moment was a long time ago. I had three when I was singled out as being kind of special. That made me feel very good. But the happiest moment of my whole life is probably being married to somebody who was the smartest man and the most interesting man I have ever met and having these two amazing

Craig Patterson 57:49

children. Do you feel like that's the most important success in your life then?

Tommy Patterson 57:54

Yeah, I think I probably do.

Craig Patterson 57:56

What do you think would be your biggest frustration?

Tommy Patterson 58:02

My biggest frustrated is that I did not finish something which my grandmother said was not good. If you're gonna start something you have to finish it and I spent years trying to read Little Women which I hated.

Tommy Patterson 58:17

I tried it four times, never finished it. I've decided now to give that up. I'm not going to try to read Little Women again, I hated it, but I did not finish getting my master's degree and I am, that's probably my big, what did you, disappointment?

Tommy Patterson 58:35

Frustration. That's my frustration that I didn't stay with it so the choice I made was to leave the job and leave Kansas and that ended up marrying Dick and having these two nifty kids so it was a good bargain but it I still feel frustrated that I didn't do it.

Craig Patterson 58:57

Well if you could suddenly change that and have a master's degree would you want does it frustrate you because because of your personal growth the potential personal growth and not having it or because you might have done something else with the

Tommy Patterson 59:15

degree? No, the first thing, if I frustrated my personal growth, I would have liked to have completed a task that I started

because I said an hour ago that one of my niftiest characteristics was by persistence.

Tommy Patterson 59:30

Well I didn't persist to finish that, so that makes me annoyed with myself.

Craig Patterson 59:38

I think you can give your self -permission to stop being annoyed.

Tommy Patterson 59:43

Well what a lovely thing for you to say to me.

Craig Patterson 59:54

If I'd known it was gonna be that easy I would have said it 30 years ago.

Tommy Patterson 01:00:00

I don't know maybe I wouldn't have been all right to give myself permission 30 -years ago perhaps.

Craig Patterson 01:00:07

What's the most difficult thing that ever happened to you and how did you deal with it?

Tommy Patterson 01:00:12

Well that decision was pretty difficult but I think I have gotten, that's part of my maturing, I think i've gotten to the point where it's okay. I made the decision and it turned out swell and so I thing that it was okay but it was difficult for me to have Dick die because I didn't know, this sounds so stupid.

Tommy Patterson 01:00:53

I didn't know exactly what I was supposed to do or who I was suppose to be because there was a time when I was not so much Tommy Patterson as I was Dale Patterson's wife and there's a difference. And when he died I had to make that transition and I didn't know whether I knew how to do it and if you want to know how I did it I can't tell you because I don't I just but it took me a long time so I tell people and it told me about four years to adjust to being me instead of Dale Patterson's wife.

Craig Patterson 01:01:39

Well I think you've done a tremendous job at it actually because I can't think of anyone else who would be able to live 25 years completely on their own in the mountains and still be sitting here talking to me 25 year later certainly there are health problems but everybody's gonna have those but how many people could live I'm sure that people in a lot of cities would think that you're living in log cabin with no running water or electricity, it's certainly not like that, but it shares some aspects of that because you have to be not just self -sufficient, but willing to self sufficient for insanely long periods of time.

Tommy Patterson 01:02:32

That's a wonderful thing for you to say to me.

Craig Patterson 01:02:36

Oh, I'm not saying it to wonderful, it is absolutely true. and I know that you sometimes compare yourself to your mother because your mother lived by herself until she was 93? 90. 90 and then moved immediately from her house to the hospital where she passed away three days later so for some reason you think that there's a standard that she set that you're not meeting but in fact the opposite is true because she didn't live on her own her entire life she's she had an entire family of people borders family friends guests constantly in her house which you have never had the

Tommy Patterson 01:03:25

opportunity of having but she took care of all those people no they took

Craig Patterson 01:03:29

care her she thought she to care them but she didn't she couldn't have survived in that house by herself she couldn't have done what you've been doing for the last 25 years. So that's something you should know.

Tommy Patterson 01:03:54

Thank you. So moving on. If I start having help now can I still kind of muscle in on that comment?

Craig Patterson 01:04:07

Yes because she had helped that entire time. So yes of course you can have help. Absolutely. Absolutely. So I just have a few more questions to go. What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you were young?

Tommy Patterson 01:04:28

Oh my.

Craig Patterson 01:04:30

And none of these really require an answer.

Tommy Patterson 01:04:32

No, but that's something to think about. What you, what do I know know that I wish I had known? I'm not, I am not sure that I have an answered to that.

Craig Patterson 01:04:45

That's fine.

Tommy Patterson 01:04:46

There may be one, but I haven't meditated about that.

Craig Patterson 01:04:50

Is there something that you've thrown away that you wish you had kept?

Tommy Patterson 01:04:59

Yes, there is. But now I've forgotten what it is, so I'll have to think about a minute. There's one thing that I did get rid of. Oh, I know. When my mother died, we went through all these things and we all got to pick what we wanted.

Tommy Patterson 01:05:20

And the marvelous thing about that was the extent to which my brothers and I argued was this, quote, well, I think I'd kind of like this dish, unless you want it, if you wanted, take it. Take it? That's okay.

Tommy Patterson 01:05:37

Yes, you take a dough. I don't need to have it." That is how much we argued. So we got everything taken care of. And since then, there was a set of China, woven China baskets that were very big 100 years ago.

Tommy Patterson 01:06:05

And I said I didn't want them because I didn't want to go with anything I had and I don't have to take care of them. And some small hand -painted plates. And I didn't pick those. I don't know whether any of the other girls did or not, or either of the girls.

Tommy Patterson 01:06:25

But since then I thought, oh, I wish I had taken those, I could have sold those at the Antique Roadshow, because they were old. That's too bad I did not take those but I would have had to take care of them all this time and I do not want them and didn not really want the responsibility of them.

Tommy Patterson 01:06:43

on. So the only thing I'm missing is that they were sort of interesting because of their history but that's not something that I really wanted. Does that count? Yeah, that counts.

Craig Patterson 01:06:57

Has the way you look at life or people changed over the period, over the course of your life?

Tommy Patterson 01:07:09

I think I am trying to be a little bit more generous in my assessment of other people because I know that I have flaws of which I'm not even aware. I mean, there's some things about me that must rub somebody the wrong way.

Tommy Patterson 01:07:31

I don't know about whether it does my kids or not, but there are things. So, if other people rub me the wrong way, I shouldn't let it bug me because I probably drive them crazy. I think I would like to be a little more generous in my

assessment of other people.

Tommy Patterson 01:07:48

There are one or two people that I think are basically mean -spirited and I'm not going to be very generous with them, but there's no reason to take offense at how other people do, they're doing something.

Tommy Patterson 01:08:03

For instance, an awful lot of people ask me how old I am. I don't care anymore. I used to care and I use to say, well, we didn't ask people that. I'm from the Midwest, like Johnny Carson. We didn't ask people things like that, I Don't Care.

Tommy Patterson 01:08:20

It doesn't matter to me, now I'm not particularly proud of being 94 what's to be proud about?

Craig Patterson 01:08:28

Well you're not 94.

Tommy Patterson 01:08:29

84 thank you because I haven't died yet that should make me proud that I haven't died.

Craig Patterson 01:08:35

Did your parents or grandparents give you a piece of advice that you still remember?

Tommy Patterson 01:08:40

My grandfather did not my grandfather and my father's parents I don't remember a word they said to me but my grandmother my mother's mother gave me a book and she had written some stuff in it and then she had another book that one of my cousins gave her and it was kind of a quotation book sort of not an autographed book but she had people write their favorite things in and I ended up with that because that cousin died and that's a very nice book.

Tommy Patterson 01:09:21

But one thing that my grandmother did tell me was I'm not sure that I could even remember the whole thing but I have learned patience from the impatient, tolerance from the bigoted and kindness from mean -spirited and strangely not Not strangely, I have no gratitude to my teachers.

Tommy Patterson 01:09:51

And I think that is a very profound thought. And think about that. She also liked Whittier, a poem about dying. thing, and she recited that to me and I learned that at her behest, I guess, so I think about my grandmother a lot.

Tommy Patterson 01:10:26

She was a pretty amazing woman. She lived to be ninety -seven. One reason I believe she lived in ninety seven is that my mother took care of her for thirty or 40 years, and uh,

Craig Patterson 01:10:44

if your sons had stayed and lived here for the last 25 years do you think you'd be a little better off? Please say no.

Tommy Patterson 01:10:55

No, I don't think so. Okay thank you. I don't think I would be. The only way that I'd better, since good old Don Ameche invented the telephone, that's great. But I think that the fact that my sons keep in touch with me by telephone or by seeing me, and they do talk to me.

Tommy Patterson 01:11:26

That's something. There are some people whose children don't talk them, which I don't quite understand. If they had lived closer, that wouldn't have kept my knee from going bad, and it wouldn't have affected any of my physical disabilities.

Tommy Patterson 01:11:57

I can't imagine that they would have. So no, I don't think I'll be better off.

Craig Patterson 01:12:04

If a young person came to you asking what's the most important thing for living a good life, what would you say?

Tommy Patterson 01:12:10

Oh my goodness. Well, the instant answer to that has to be a positive attitude. But there are lots of things for living what, a good life? Yeah. There are a lot of thing to think about to live a a life.

Tommy Patterson 01:12:29

So you want to start with a positive and let it go at that because I don't want sit here and list all of the things for it living a real life

Craig Patterson 01:12:37

What do you see as your place or purpose in life? And how did you come to that conclusion?

Tommy Patterson 01:12:42

Oh, my purpose and life. I came to the conclusion about 70 years ago that I would like to live my life so that every day I made somebody else's life a little brighter, not necessarily even better, just a bit brighter or something, a laugh here, or maybe help them in some way, but maybe not.

Tommy Patterson 01:13:29

And I have to do that every day, make somebody's life a lot brighter. That has been my goal for this whole time.

Craig Patterson 01:13:38

Is that what you'd like your children and grandchildren to remember about you, or is there something else?

Tommy Patterson 01:13:49

Well, if I did that, that wouldn't be too bad to be remembered for that would it? No. So I just, I would like to have them have happy, happy remembrances, positive remembrances.

Craig Patterson 01:14:08

I'll just have one more question. Is there another influential experience or person in your life? Is there any other subject that we have not covered that you want to make sure that? We do

Tommy Patterson 01:14:28

Right at the moment. I have the feeling that. You have done a remarkable job of covering all the things that I would have thought to cover Because the one the the only thing that seems to me very personal Fairly private that i don't talk about to everybody you did cover and that's the business about getting my spiritual renewal by looking out the window at the mountain and I think you've done a very comprehensive job.

Craig Patterson 01:15:08

Well then I'll go ahead and sign off but I just want to say in closing that there must be some sort of cosmic alignment of forces that allowed us to do this because we've been doing it for two and a half hours and the phone is not rung one single time which I cannot understand knowing that you knowing as I do how critical the phone to your communication with the people that you care about and people you know which are kind of one in the same mostly it's beyond my imagination that the phone hasn't rung this entire time.

Tommy Patterson 01:15:49

I think it's because it is a Saturday night and most normal people go out on Saturday Night and do

Craig Patterson 01:15:55

something. Oh I don't know I'm not sure they do anymore, but either way yeah thank you so much for devoting this time and especially after having been in the ER today we carded you right out of the ER and back up to here and made you and answer all these questions, I appreciate it very much.

Tommy Patterson 01:16:14

Well, thank you for asking because of course, it has to be a lot of fun to talk about oneself.

Craig Patterson 01:16:23

Sure, and I hope so.

Tommy Patterson 01:16:24

And so thank for the opportunity. And also, thank the for opportunity to share this with you because I don't know whether we



have talked about all this stuff or not. No,

Craig Patterson 01:16:38

there's a lot of new information here. So thank you very much.